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Volume 2, Issue 37 | THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5TH, 2026 | wilcoxnewspapers.com

Thousands brave cold to partake in Ice Breaker

By James Windell

On Saturday, January 31, 2026, thousands of people jammed the streets of Downtown South Haven for the 32nd Ice Breaker festival.

Based on the number of people participating the various activities throughout the city, Ice Breaker was a booming – though frigid – success.

With 26 restaurants and organizations competing in the popular Chili Cook-Off, residents and visitors alike withstood the frosty temperatures to stand in line to sample chili – and vote for their favorite.

Hundreds of people braved the cold along the Black River to line up for the privilege of hurling a frozen fish in the annual Frozen Fish Fling, sponsored by the National Blueberry Festival.

In addition, hundreds more surrounded Coast Guard Hill to watch the Cardboard Sled Race which was sponsored by Re/Max Lakeshore.

After several hundred people competed in the Frozen Fish Fling, the winner of the men's competition was Jim Blake from Chicago. He tossed a frozen trout 154 feet. The winning toss from a female went to Eva, who lives in Holland.

At the Awards Ceremony at 6:00 pm on Saturday at the American Legon Post #49, Chamber of Commerce Director Brandy Key announced winners of some of the contests held throughout the day.

Winner of the Amateur Ice Carving event was Joel Gresiakowski of Taste Restaurant. Receiving the First Place Trophy for Student Ice Carving was Bangor Public Schools.

The winner of the Professional Ice Carving event was Jerome and Shannon Bajo of Shores Vacation Rental.

The Mayor's Choice Award for the Ice Carving event was given by Mayor Annie Brown to Jason Avery of Lakefront Roofing and Exteriors.

The final award of the evening, and the one most people were eagerly awaiting, was for the Chili Cook-Off. Key told the assembled crowd that the winner this year was Three Blondes Restaurant. This was the first year that Three Blondes won the Chili Cook-Off contest.

Photos by Tom Renner

CARDBOARD SLED RACES

FROZEN FISH THROWING

Man suffers leg injury while on ice

South Haven Area Emergency Services (SHAES) responders were called to the city's South Beach at 3:05 p.m. Sunday to a report of a subject who fell while on the Lake Michigan ice shelf approximately 100 yards offshore.

The subject suffered a leg injury and needed to be taken to shore in a gurney. The injured subject was taken by ambulance to a Kalamazoo hospital.

This is the second incident of this kind this winter.

Authorities are again appealing to people to stay off the Lake Michigan ice shelves and pier heads.

Photos courtesy South Haven Area Emergency Services

ICE SCULPTURES

Black History Leadership Society celebrates Black History Month

By James Windell

The Black History Leadership Society celebrates Black History Month on Sunday, February 15, 2026, at Lily of The Valley Church in Covert.

It will be the 48th Annual Celebration by The Black History Leadership Society and this year they are honoring African American Health Care Professionals past and present.

The guest speaker and honoree at the event, which aims at bringing an awareness of African American contributions to the advancement of Medical Technology, will be Rosalind Davis, a Nurse Professional Development Specialist with Beacon Kalamazoo (formerly Accension Borgess).

"It is important for people to be educated about African American Contributions in medicine because for far too long it has not been shared in our communities," said Dorothy Sherrod, a member of the South Haven Black History Leadership Society.

Rosalind Davis, BSN, RN

Rosalind Davis, BSN, RN, who has been a registered nurse for almost 50 years, will speak about "Doors of Faith and Opportunity." She says that her professional motto is "Nursing is not about what I do; it's about who I am."

In her role at Beacon Kalamazoo, Davis provides clinical staff with educational opportunities to enhance skills and foster ongoing professional development, and she supports a culture of lifelong learning by promoting and providing educational and developmental opportunities for health professionals. Over her career, she has taught a diverse group of healthcare professionals including licensed nurses, nursing students, patient care technicians, patient care associates, nurse aids, monitor technicians, Emergency Medical Techs and Paramedic personnel. Davis also provides in-service training and continuing education in cardiology critical care nursing.

In addition, Davis has been a Nurse Consultant in community education, including being a CPR & Advanced Life support instructor. She currently provides adjunct education for the Nurse Education team at Beacon Kalamazoo.

Besides guest speaker Davis, Dr. Charles Peterson will read his poetry.

Often referred to as "The Poet," Dr. Peterson, is known for his socially conscious poetry that blends philosophy, faith, and cultural commentary. He has released several books reflecting his personal journey and worldview.

The celebration of Black History Month takes place at Lily of The Valley Church, 30600 M-140 in Covert at 4:00 pm on Sunday, February 15. The program is free

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Hostetler named new county dispatch director

Van Buren County Dispatch Director Tim McGee, center, retired Jan. 30, concluding a career in public service that spanned decades. McGee had served as Dispatch Director since 2016. McGee's journey into public service began at the age of 12, when he ran fire calls alongside his father with the Norway Fire Department in Norway, Mich. By the age of 14, he had already joined a volunteer search and rescue team with the Dickinson County Sheriff's Office. Throughout his career, McGee has worn many hats in service to the public, including security officer, police officer, associate pastor, lead pastor, chaplain for SHEAS and the South Haven Police Department, and dispatcher. McGee began at Van Buren County Central Dispatch in 2005 as a dispatcher, before retiring as Dispatch Director. Shown in photo with McGee, from left, Undersheriff Casey Davis, and at far right, Sheriff Daniel Abbott. Photo courtesy/Van Buren County Sheriff's Office

The new dispatch director officially began that role at 3 p.m. on Jan. 30. "Mike Hostetler was selected to fill the foreseen vacancy with Tim McGee's retirement," said Van Buren County Sheriff Daniel Abbott.

"Mike worked the past several months alongside Tim to make it a smooth transition. Mike brings a lot of experience to the new role he's taking on. Mike has a total of 32 years in dispatching, beginning his career at South Haven's dispatch center from 1993-1999. Mike started his career here in February 2000, putting him here for just over 26 years. Mike has been one of the supervisors in dispatch over the last several years. Mike was a SHEAS firefighter for approximately 10 years and a marine deputy here for 10 years. We are excited to have Mike in his new role and have no doubt he'll pick up right where Tim left off," said Sheriff Daniel Abbott.

Dispatch Director Tim McGee's last day was Jan. 30, 2026. "We wish Tim all the best in his retirement. Tim had a long history of public service dating back to when he was 12-years-old running fire calls with his dad in 1972. Throughout Tim's career, he was a member of a search and rescue team, security officer, police officer, associate pastor, lead pastor, chaplain for different agencies, and working in dispatch centers ending his career here as the director. Tim is going to be missed greatly as he's done such a good job here. We all truly wish him the best," said Sheriff Abbott.

Van Buren County Sheriff's Office Uniform Response handled a single vehicle crash in Keeler Township. The driver of the vehicle was highly intoxicated and was ultimately lodged for the incident, according to Sheriff Daniel Abbott. No injuries occurred during the incident.

Uniform Response was very busy once again with multiple crashes and slide-offs this past week. "One deputy came very close to being hit by a semi driving way too fast for the conditions and jack knifing by them after passing another deputy who also witnessed the close call." said Sheriff Abbott.

Uniform Response handled a serious crash on Interstate-94 Highway in which a truck pulling a trailer rear-ended a semi. The driver of the truck had to be extricated from the vehicle. The driver was transported to the hospital with serious injuries. "This unfortunately is another grim reminder to slow down in bad weather, especially when visibility is poor," said Sheriff Abbott.

A deputy stopped to assist some individuals not from the area on a slide-off. The individuals advised they already called for a wrecker, but it wouldn't be there for 1.5 hours. "The deputy inquired about which wrecker, and it wasn't a service he was familiar with even though they told the individuals they were from Paw Paw. The deputy called the number and found immediately it was a scam and they charged the individual/victim for $600 in advance. The victim was able to cancel the transaction before it cleared. The scammers were using a boost phone. They were able to set it up on the internet so when googling a wrecker from the area, they would pop up," said Sheriff Abbott.

Uniform Response handled a break-in, in Arlington Township. The suspects broke into a residence that is being remodeled and updated. Several tools and items were stolen in the overnight hours. "The tools that were stolen had "Nacho" written on them. Anyone with any information on this is asked to call our office," said Sheriff Abbott.

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2ND FRONT PAGE

Dragicevich retires after 42 years on county EDC Board

Members of the Van Buren Economic Development Corporation Board include, from left, Zach Morris, Stephanie Timmer, Mike Toth, Tom Stanek, Rodney Dragicevich, Kurt Doroh, Paul Schincariol, and Randy Peat. Courier-Leader photo/Paul Garrod

Van Buren County Economic Development Corporation Board chair, Tom Stanek, right, presents a plaque Monday, Feb. 2, to retiring board member, Rodney Dragicevich. Dragicevich served 42 years on the board. Courier-Leader photo/Paul Garrod

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
news4garrod@gmail.com

PAW PAW - Serving more than four decades on the Van Buren County Economic Development Corporation, Rodney Dragicevich, who earlier announced his retirement, was honored Monday afternoon by the county EDC, as well as state legislators and county officials.

Dragicevich, who served 42 years on the county EDC board, received a state Special Tribute from State Representative Pauline Wendzel. It was also signed by State Senator Aric Nesbitt.

It read in part: "That it is with deep appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and professionalism that Rodney Dragicevich has put forth on behalf of the people of Van Buren County that we offer this expression of our thanks and best wishes in retirement. As the people of Van Buren County recognize the loyalty and devotion to public service of this hardworking individual, we add our sentiments of gratitude for a job well done."

It continued, "In 42 years of service to the people of Van Buren County, Rodney Dragicevich has been working in the public arena during an era of great change and challenge. As Rodney well knows, financial pressures and changing expectations have combined to make the recent past a challenging time to work in local government. With the personal sense of duty that Rodney Dragicevich brings to work each day, however, he has been able to meet this challenge with enthusiasm and a genuine interest in efficiency in public service. This has been deeply appreciated, both by citizens and organizations in Van Buren County that have benefitted directly from Rodney Dragicevich's work as well as other public servants who have witnessed this fine example."

It concluded, "There can be little doubt that in his responsibilities as a member of the Board of Directors and the Economic Development Corporation since 1983, Rodney Dragicevich has contributed to our community in ways that will have a lasting impact. We offer our thanks on this personal milestone."

Van Buren County EDC Board Chair Tom Stanek presented Dragicevich with a plaque that read: "With gratitude for your service and commitment to our community."

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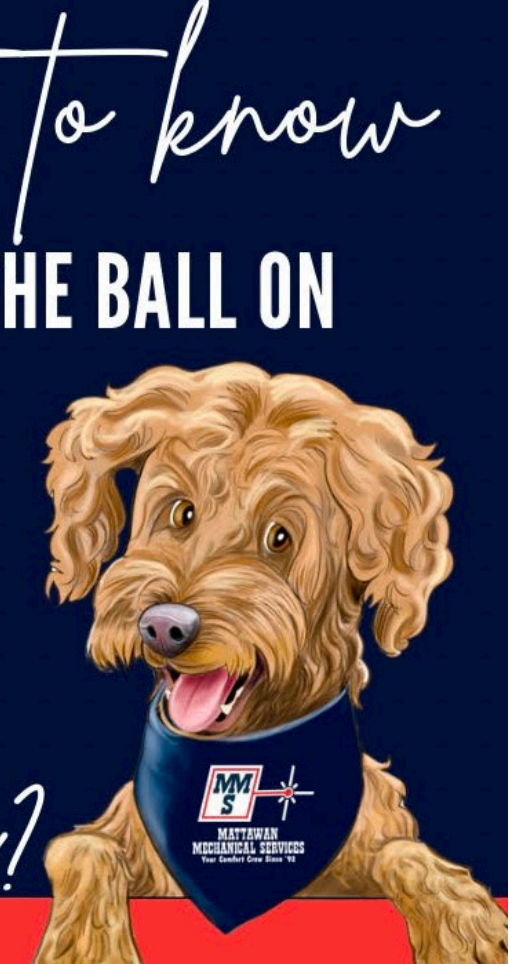

Commissioners approve adoption of five-year parks and recreation plan

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
news4garrod@gmail.com

PAW PAW – On Jan. 27, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners adopted the Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan: 2026–2030 as the official five-year Parks and Recreation Plan for Van Buren County.

Commissioners authorized submission of the adopted plan and the resolution to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for approval and grant eligibility purposes.

Van Buren County is required to maintain a current five-year Parks and Recreation Plan approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in order to remain eligible for grant funding through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), Land and Water Conservation Fund, and other related programs.

Van Buren County, with assistance from the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, undertook a planning process to determine the recreation and natural resource conservation needs and desires of its residents during a five-year period covering the years 2026 through 2030, consistent with the most recent guidelines developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Van Buren County residents were provided with an opportunity during the development of the draft Plan to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan.

The draft Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan: 2026–2030 was made available for a minimum 30-day public review period, with appropriate public notice and reasonable accommodations for public access and comment.

A public hearing on the proposed Plan was held on Jan. 13, to provide an opportunity for all residents to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Plan.

The Van Buren County Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the Plan and recommended adoption by the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners.

The Plan serves as a policy and planning guide for improving recreation opportunities and enhancing natural resource conservation within Van Buren County, and adoption of the Plan is necessary to maintain eligibility for state and federal recreation grant programs administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

In another area, Commissioners recognized and extended its appreciation to Rodney Dragicevich for his "exceptional service, leadership, and dedication to the economic vitality of Van Buren County. Commissioners honored Dragicevich for his longstanding commitment to the community and its businesses and extended best wishes for him for continued success in all future endeavors.

Dragicevich had been "an outstanding and dedicated member" of the Economic Development Corporation of Van Buren County since 1983, serving seven terms "and positively impacting countless businesses throughout the county."

Commissioners said during Dragicevich's tenure as a member of the Board of Directors, one of Dragicevich's key achievements was helping to bring the discount department store chain Fisher's Big Wheel to the Village of Paw Paw, a location now occupied by Family Fare Supermarket.

Dragicevich faithfully guided the use of the County Revolving Loan Fund, overseeing the lending of millions of dollars to multiple businesses and communities to support growth and long-term sustainability, creating jobs, encouraging significant capital investment, and helping to stabilize the county tax base.

In response to the economic challenges of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Dragicevich played a key role in authorizing twelve $20,000 loans at a two percent interest rate over five years, with interest-only payments during the first year, providing critical assistance to small businesses impacted by the pandemic.

Commissioners approved a resolution for the Van Buren County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (VBCBRA) to apply for a $500,000 Community-Wide Brownfield Assessment Grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), with support from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE).

The EPA Brownfields Program provides funding to assess, plan for, and prioritize the cleanup and reuse of properties where real or perceived environmental conditions have limited redevelopment. The proposed grant would fund Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments, cleanup planning, and related environmental investigations at eligible brownfield sites throughout Van Buren County.

Commissioners said access to community-wide assessment funding will reduce redevelopment risk, improve site readiness, and position local units, nonprofit partners, and private developers to advance environmentally responsible reuse of underutilized and vacant properties. The grant will create opportunities to support environmental and economic development projects, including redevelopment for housing, commercial activity, public infrastructure, and community-serving uses, while promoting environmental protection and long-term land reuse.

Assessment funding will help ensure that redevelopment efforts consider public health, environmental conditions, and equitable community outcomes, including benefits to areas impacted by disinvestment or limited redevelopment capacity.

The VBCBRA has successfully administered prior EPA Brownfield funding and has the organizational capacity, technical support, and financial oversight necessary to manage the grant in compliance with all applicable federal and state requirements.

Commissioners said if the grant is not awarded, no financial obligation or material cost will be incurred by Van Buren County.

Commissioners approved the appointment of Anne Wendling to the Van Buren Cass Community Health Department Board for a three-year term to expire January 1, 2029. She fills a vacancy on the VBCCHD Board that was created when former Commissioner Don Hanson decided not to request a re-appointment.

Wendling, RN, is the Chief Nursing Officer and vice president of Patient Care Services, Bronson Lake View and Bronson South Haven hospitals.

Commissioners approved a request for out-of-state travel for Van Buren County Sheriff's Office Detective Chris Orr to attend the Digital Video Recording (DVR) Training in Hoover, Alabama, from Feb. 8 -13.

It is a one-week course designed for examiners/investigators to learn methodologies and techniques used to recover and analyze video evidence from Digital Video Recorders (DVR) and other sources. Students will develop knowledge of digital video data structures, how digital video is created, proper playback, creating demonstrative exhibits and reporting of findings.

Commissioners approved the Board Chair to sign a contract authorizing the Court's continued partnership with Safe Harbor Children's Advocacy Center for CASA services.

Safe Harbor CAC actively recruits and trains volunteers for Van Buren County's CASA program. There are currently five volunteers and the feedback from contract attorneys is positive.

The contracted amount continues to be $80,000 for FY26.

Commissioners approved signing a contract authorizing the Court's continued use of the Allegan County Juvenile Center for lodging youth when there is a need for youth and/or community safety. Courts are required by childcare fund requirements to employ a quality assurance specialist to support the county with implementing and maintaining research-based practices related to juvenile justice reform (JJR).

Allegan County Juvenile Center is a reliable partner in the juvenile justice needs of Van Buren County's youth. They assist with stabilization and safety, monitoring and education, medication management, and are quick to respond to emergency requests for lodging.

The financial impact depends on the number of youth lodged. In FY25, the financial impact was $202,401.20 for 915 days of out-of-home care. This program receives 50 percent reimbursement from the childcare fund.

Commissioners approved signing a contract with Petersen Research Consultants that will continue the Court's relationship with Dr. Jodi Petersen as the county's Quality Assurance Specialist.

Petersen has a long-standing relationship with Van Buren County and has been intensely involved with JJR since its beginning. Over this past year, she has begun compiling and analyzing recidivism data and training for consistent risk needs assessment.

The contract is for $19,150.

Commissioners approved the Court's continued agreement with MST Associates who provides MST Program support and training that allows VBCMH to offer the Multisystemic Therapy model for Van Buren County youth. It is an intensive in-home evidence-based therapy.

The contract with MST Associates is $52,000.

Commissioners approved a contract authorizing the Court's continued partnership with the VBCMH for a parent navigator.

The VBCMH employs an individual who has extensive knowledge of the child

protective system and community resources. Cecily Hodder serves as a bridge for clients and supports them. Commissioners said this innovative service is often enough to allow children to stay in their homes before a case has to come to court.

The parent navigator has also been a turning point in long-standing complex court cases where parents no longer had trust in the system.

Commissioners said Ms. Hodder's knowledge and expertise are a priceless service to the families.

The $117,000 contract represents a $20,000 increase over the prior contract. This increase is offset by decreased spending in the CMH–MST contract for FY26.

Commissioners approved a request for Ryan Smith, Trial Court Administrator, and Veronica Stillson, Family Division Administrator, to attend the 2026 National Association of Court Management Mid-Year Conference March 15-18, in Albuquerque, NM.

Kim Kiley and Roger Engle were reappointed to the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission for a two-year term to expire Dec. 31, 2027.

SHARA receives grant for summer program

Chris Van Hekken

By James Windell

Thanks to a grant from the state of Michigan's MiLeap Program, the South Haven Area Recreation Authority (SHARA) will be running a summer program for children.

Community Recreation Director Chris Van Hekken says that grant was received in conjunction with the Van Buren County Intermediate School District.

"We're going to have enough funding to host a summer program, which we will have at Maple Grove Elementary School this summer," Van Hekken says. "It will be a 6-week camp that will run Monday through Thursday for ages kindergarten through 4th grade."

Earlier this month, the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) announced the awarding of $73 million in Out-of-School Time (OST) Grant funding to 289 Michigan organizations to expand access to high-quality, before-school, after-school, and summer learning opportunities for students statewide. The Van Buren County Intermediate School District was awarded $1,012,860 through Michigan's 32n Out of School Time (OST) Grant, which is administered by MiLEAP.

Van Hekken says that SHARA will be partnering with the South Haven Center for the Arts in the summer camp program. "The Center for the Arts will be helping us with the educational piece," Van Hekken says. "Our focus will be the outdoor learning space at Maple Grove Elementary School. They have 10 acres of wooded classroom space outside, and we'll be having our classrooms out there."

Van Hekken says that any child in the South Haven school district can attend the summer camp. Registration will open up on March 15, 2026 and more information can be found on the SHARA website at https:southhavenrecreation.org.

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Three Blondes wins Chili Cook-Off Contest for the first time

By James Windell

After The Lodge won the Chili Cook-Off for the past four years, Three Blondes Brewing beat them out in the popular Ice Breaker event this year.

"We are so excited!" says Carrie Troyer, one of three co-owners of the restaurant at 1875 Phoenix, in South Haven. "They had a stronghold over this award for a while, so it was a lot of hard work for us to win. I feel like we got really lucky."

Taking a few minutes off from serving a bustling brunch crowd on Sunday, February 1, Troyer says that Chef Antoine deserves the credit for the winning chili. Troyer says their chili is a buffalo white chicken chili, however, Chef Antoine described in a slightly different way.

"It's a buffalo chicken wing without the work," the chef says.

No matter how it is described, the tasty chili was a big order item at the restaurant on the day after winning the contest.

Three Blondes Brewing is a hometown success story. Three sisters, Carrie Troyer, Megan Zernicke, and Amanda Johnson, grew up in South Have, but returned in 2018 to start a community centered brewery that reflects their personalities, family roots, and love of craft beer.

The idea of a brewery grew out of a family project, but the sisters spent years researching, planning, and experimenting before launching the business. When they opened their doors, they became one of the first women brewery owners in Michigan. Now they are known for more than 50 rotating beers, locally inspired food and a lively taproom atmosphere.

Talking about their success in the Chili Cook-Off, Troyer seemed to exemplify the friendly spirit of their brewery.

"You know tough competition only makes you better," she says. "So, we appreciate that that we have good, strong competition. It's great to have friendly competition here in South Haven."

She added that it was great seeing people come out and eating chili downtown during Ice Breaker while supporting all the businesses in South Haven.

"We just love Ice Breaker," she says. "It's been just a great weekend and Ice Breaker is a real boost. It's just lovely."

OBITUARIES

Margaret Jane Makowski

Margaret Jane Makowski, 88, of Paw Paw, MI, passed away peacefully surrounded by her family on Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026, at her home in Paw Paw. She was born Sept. 27, 1937, in North Girard, Pennsylvania, the daughter of Charles Hazen and Gladys (Miller) Hazen.

Jane obtained her associate's degree in nursing and worked as a Registered Nurse her entire working life. Jane and her husband, John, moved to Paw Paw in 1972, where Jane began working at Bronson Lake View Hospital. Jane adored her job as a nurse and wanted nothing more than to help others. Her last nursing role was taking care of a young man in his home until his death. Outside of being his nurse, she became a true friend to him, and they shared many of the same interests, including sci-fi and watching the Young and the Restless together.

Jane was an animal lover and loved all animals, with dogs and horses being her favorite, however she had many figurines and pictures of wolves and big cats around her home as well. Jane enjoyed visiting the zoo and giving her attention to the big cat exhibits. A woman of many hobbies, she could often be found doing puzzles, knitting, crocheting or researching family genealogy. Jane watched a lot of racing and wrestling in her down time as well. She enjoyed music and sang in the Paw Paw Community Chorus since 2007 and was a faithful member of Saint Mary's Catholic Church, Paw Paw. She will be deeply missed.

She is survived by her children, Stephen Gerard, Michele (Jeff) Sivley, Melissa (Gerald) Makowski and Mike (Vicki) Makowski; grandchildren, Rachel, Melissa, Clayton (Cheyenne), Stephanie, David, Ericka, Emily (Jarod) and Ethan; great-grandchildren, Cayla, Haylie and Clayton.

Jane is preceded in passing by her parents, husband, John Paul Makowski in 2020; daughter, Stephanie Anne Makowski, and brother, C. Melville Hazen.

Family and friends are invited to visit on Feb. 28, from 1 to 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Adams Funeral Home, 502 W. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw. A rosary service will be held at 7:00 p.m. A Memorial Mass will be held at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be directed to Paw Paw Community Chorus or Defenders of Wildlife.

Share a memory or sign the online guestbook at adamspawpaw.com

Beverly Jeanne (Pompey) Brooks

Beverly Jeanne (Pompey) Brooks, 90, of Paw Paw, MI, went to be with her Lord and Savior on Jan. 28, 2026, after a sudden illness. Bev, as she was known to most everyone, was born Sept. 11, 1935, the daughter of the late Kenneth and Gladys Pompey of Hartford.

Bev graduated from Hartford High School in 1954. She continued her education by obtaining her LPN and RN nursing degrees at Kellogg Community College and Southwestern Michigan College, respectively. Much of her nursing career was spent at Bronson Lake View Hospital in Paw Paw. She dedicated over 40 years to patient care in multiple capacities as an LPN, RN, Nurse Manager, and Childbirth Educator. Her primary focus being obstetrics, Bev was instrumental in the development of birthing rooms and family centered care. She received the Southwestern Michigan Perinatal Association's Perinatal Award for Excellence in 1992 and 1999. She retired from nursing in 1999.

Bev's hobbies included gardening and traveling, and she had an enormous love for music. She also enjoyed updating family history records and photo albums. She was a member of the Paw Paw United Methodist Church. She enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren and attending their activities.

Bev married her high school sweetheart, Robert (Bob) Brooks, in Hartford, at the Federated Church on July 3, 1954. Together, they enjoyed traveling on many trips. Bev especially enjoyed spending the winters with her husband in their park model home on Sarasota Bay in Florida.

Bev resided in Hartford for most of her school years, and after marriage, settled in Paw Paw with Bob.

After 57 years of marriage, her husband Bob passed away due to cancer on Father's Day in 2011.

She is survived by her sons, Bryan Brooks of Defiance, OH, Barry Brooks of Washington State, and Brad (Michelle) Brooks of Lawton. Bev leaves six grandchildren, Sarah, Jackie, Brandy, Seth, Brandon, and Lev; and four great-grandchildren, Robert, RyLynn, Asher, and Vivian.

Other survivors include her sister Marcia (John) Molter of Watervliet; brother-in-law, Franc (Betty) Brooks of Schoolcraft; sister-in-law, Wanda Story of Buchanan, MI, as well as many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

In keeping with Bev's wishes, she will be cremated, and a memorial service will be held in the spring at Adams Funeral Home.

Memorial contributions may be directed to Centrica Care Navigators.

Share a memory or sign an online guestbook at adamspawpaw.com

GOBLES PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOLS OF CHOICE PROGRAM 2025-2026

Gobles Public School District recognizes the Schools of Choice Program adopted by the Michigan legislature and plans to implement the Schools of Choice Program for the 2025-2026 school year. Gobles Public Schools will accept applications from non-resident students residing within the Van Buren Intermediate School District boundaries, and in school districts located in contiguous intermediate school districts for the 2025-2026 school year under the Schools of Choice Program and will comply with the deadlines and requirements set forth by the law.

Applications for the Schools of Choice Program are available on line at (www.gobles.org) and in the Superintendent's Office and will be accepted beginning January 5, 2026 through January 23, 2026. The District will notify the parent or legal guardian of each nonresident applicant who is accepted for enrollment of the date by which the student must enroll and the procedures for enrollment.

Three inducted in to SHHS Hall of Fame

The Grimes family

Mariah Boss-Hescot

1985 volleyball team

Three new inductees into the South Haven High School Athletic Hall of Fame were celebrated Friday during the home basketball games.

Honored were Mariah Boss-Hescott, a 2012 graduate who earned eight varsity letters in swimming and softball and was a member of the National Honor Society; the 1985 Class B state championship volleyball team and posthumously Joshua Cyrus Grimes, a basketball standout who died of a brain tumor his senior year.

Members of the Grimes family accepted the award in his memory. Dene Hadden, South Haven's first volleyball coach, was joined by several members of the championship team.

The Hall of Fame program is sponsored by the South Haven Athletic Boosters.

Photos by Tom Renner

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VIEWPOINT

Messing with your brain to fix tremors, my week in a fog

MIKE'S MUSINGS

MIKE WILCOX
PUBLISHER

It's been a week.

Struggling with the cold and snow has been one thing, but last Tuesday I had an appointment for focus ultrasound on the brain and since then I have literally been in a fog.

Now some readers might point out that messing with my brain might knock sense into me- sense that is much needed. But sorry, that wasn't the reason for the state-of-the-art procedure.

I have struggled with essential tremor most if not all of my life. It is a malady that makes my dominant hand- my left shake constantly, sometimes uncontrollably, thus drinking, eating or writing my own name is difficult. It is hereditary. My father had it, my sister has it, and my son has had it since birth. It can be embarrassing. You can't eat from a buffet. You get teased by classmates. People think you're an alcoholic.

One of the reasons I had doubt about this procedure was my full head of hair. I had always worn it long and was not looking forward to a shaved head. I was told it was cool to be bald. I'm not sure if I bought into "its cool to be bald mantra" but I was convinced to go for it, which I did, and can't wait for the day when I have lots of hair again.

The new procedure pinpoints exactly the area of the brain that causes the tremors and then zaps it with laser beams to stop the shaking. It is very similar to an MRI, except you are in the machine for about an hour. The final minute of that hour is very intense. The pain and pressure is unbearable.

I was going to slide out from under the machine when that final minute hit me. I couldn't take the pressure. Then I remember the doctor telling me it will only be a minute. I figure I can withstand any pain for a minute. And I did.

I wasn't prepared, however, for the following days. The doctor, nurses and literature all told me I would have headaches, brain fog and dizziness for two weeks. Well, I'm writing this on Day 6, and I'm struggling to write and remember what I was told 5 minutes ago. I wasn't supposed to drive for 2 weeks, but I broke that rule on day three.

It will be a miracle if this column makes sense. It's surreal. I feel stoned without the marijuana. I can't hit the right keys and everything is so slow, even my speech. I have to be careful how I walk because I might tip over. I actually did on day four, pulling a muscle and scraping up my left side substantially.

I'm told, and I'm confident that by the time you read this the brain fog and dizziness will be gone. I will almost be back to normal except now I can use my left hand.

My fiancé is amazed. My son was flabbergasted. Immediately after the procedure the left hand was fully functional. I could drink a glass of water immediately. I could write my name without using my right hand to steady my left.

I'm asked constantly if you would do it again. I wouldn't hesitate. In fact, I might ask them to do my right hand in a few months.

And my apology to those readers who would like to see me in a permanent state of brain fog. Ha ha, it ain't gonna happen.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ICE villainized despite being lauded under Obama

Dear Editor,

Under the Obama regime Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) were lauded by him and the media for their outstanding work. But now ICE is villainized for performing the same duties, in the same fashion. The only difference is that they are now operating under a Republican administration. The Obama regime deported some 3 million illegal aliens and it was considered the right thing to do. Then Biden, or those who manipulated him, allowed and or invited some 20 million unvetted aliens from around the world to enter our nation in his single term. As was stated at the time and we now know for certain, among these illegal aliens were terrorists and criminals.

Immigrants are never to be a financial burden to American taxpayers. A seldom mentioned fact is that for decades federal law requires all immigrants demonstrate they be self-sufficient or have a U.S. sponsor legally responsible for guaranteeing to support the immigrant at least at 125% the federal poverty guidelines. The only exception to this rule is if the immigrant is granted political asylum, which certainly does not apply to most if not all of those in question.

The only reason the left has created the chaos in Minnesota and now nationally is to distract attention away from the discovered billions of American tax dollars stolen by fraudulent business enterprises initiated and operated by legal and illegal aliens, Democrat leaders and their associates.

Liberals shamefully portray every illegal alien as if they are all honest hardworking citizens contributing to the benefit of our local communities. Where in reality they could care less about the rapists, murderers, child traffickers and those that disdain our nation and feel they are somehow entitled to our endless tax dollars. As long as they vote Democrat and provide the business or Non-Government Organization (NGO) fronts necessary to launder money to corrupt politicians, activist judges and their accomplices.

And of course, the left can't make an accusation against the Trump administration without dragging out the old, false and always tiresome claim of racism.

The left continues to strictly hold to the belief "repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth", a statement attributed to Joseph Goebbels, Adolph Hitler's Reich Minister of Propaganda.

Liberals and the main stream media now make the absurd claim that ICE is not a law enforcement agency and have no police authority and are therefore themselves breaking the law. They state that it's illegal for ICE to request proof of identity or legal status. Again, they are wrong as law enforcement can request ID from immigrants legal or otherwise (as any non-citizen aged 18 and older are required by federal law to always carry ID), and law enforcement has the legal authority to request ID from anyone they suspect of criminal activity. This includes obstruction of justice or interfering with law enforcement, that gives ICE the right to perform exactly as they are.

The left claims they are exercising their 1st amendment right of peaceable assembly by rioting, destroying public and private property, assaulting private citizens, law enforcement and military personnel. This behavior does not fall under the protected right of freedom of assembly. Once again, the left gets it wrong since they never bother to learn anything of our Constitution they falsely claim to be protecting.

Time after time they surround themselves in an avalanche of hypocrisy and deceit. Renee Good, prior to being shot by ICE officers, thought she had the right to obstruct federal law enforcement, disobey direct orders and then attempting to drive her vehicle towards an ICE officer. Alex Pretti, after already engaging in an altercation with ICE days earlier after screaming, spitting and flipping off ICE officers and childishly kicking out an ICE vehicle tail light and then runs away like a coward. His final acts were to refuse to obey ICE commands and was shot while officers attempted to subdue and then to disarm him. I certainly don't fault Pretti for legally carrying a concealed weapon, but when law enforcement tells you to surrender your weapon it's a good idea to surrender it. Things have never changed in this country and when you are instructed by law enforcement you follow their instructions. A simple enough concept that even liberals should be able to understand. One can disagree with whatever legal policies law enforcement may be engaged in. But that does not permit people to disregard the law simply to accommodate their own feelings.

The unlawful sanctuary city policies in Minnesota are responsible for the number of federal agents there. In lawful American cities local law enforcement works in conjunction with federal agencies allowing them to do their jobs efficiently. But since additional federal officers are required to do the work of local law enforcement in Minnesota, we have what we now have. Sadly, most of the rioters and agitators don't even have a legitimate reason for being there other than hating Donald Trump and America. Renee Good is portrayed as an innocent wife and mother killed by law enforcement. Yet, unarmed Ashli Babbitt was a wife and a U. S. Air Force veteran who was shot and killed by U.S. Capital Police Lieutenant Michael Byrd while the left justified if not celebrated her murder. Alex Pretti's name cannot be mentioned without also exclaiming that he was an ER nurse. Laken Riley, a 22-year-old nursing student who never had the opportunity to become a nurse, was brutally murdered and sexually assaulted by an illegal alien. But the left just considers her, and many other similar victims, collateral damage for the greater good of open borders.

Then there was the illegal assault of the Cities Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. It is a federal crime under Title 18 USC 241: "If two or more persons conspire to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate any person in any State, Territory, Commonwealth, Possession, or District in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him by the Constitution or laws of the United States, or because of his having so exercised the same". Don't believe the lie that this was a simple legal protest. Not since such activity was deemed illegal due to similar actions by the Ku Klux Klan. This persecution and intimidation against worshipping Christians occurred regularly in 1930's Germany and currently throughout many Communist and Muslim nations. But such barbarism should never be tolerated in America.

The Democrats need to remember that the majority of our nation elected Donald J. Trump to be our president, not our homecoming queen. We want our border laws enforced with illegal aliens deported or imprisoned. We want the fraudulent money laundering of our tax dollars to cease immediately. We want corrupt judges removed from the bench and criminals punished. In short, the rule of law reestablished.

Democrats like to lecture that no one is above the law. Good and Pretti are prime examples of those who act as if they are. These entitled low-information progressives were exactly who Vladimir Lenin had in mind when he referred to western liberals as "useful idiots" in promoting communism. The American left and the new Democrats have chosen sides. They have openly allied and now march with anarchists, communists and radical Islam in their opposition to any America First initiative or any effort that benefits American security, prosperity and the values of our Republic.

I hope and pray that the elected Republicans and at least some real Democrats will open their eyes and fulfill the oath of office they all took to support and defend our Republic and our Constitution and then back President Trump in his endeavors.

For the past year we have heard the imbecilic statement that "Words are violence", a statement usually uttered by someone who has never experienced violence. Although words can instigate violence, when violence occurs it is never mistaken for words.

As for those entitled snowflakes and angry white liberals who believe they somehow don't have to abide by the laws of our nation because they don't want to, all I can say is buckle-up buttercups. I'm guessing they're in for an adult dose of reality that they are hardly prepared for.

John R. Young

Drop in crime credit goes to police

Dear Editor:

The January 29th 2026 article "Professor touts gun crime intelligence centers for reducing violence" talks of "A key inititative" is the Detroit Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) and the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN).

The professor mentions these systems have been used since 2020 but the article does not mention any statistics from those years, only that the crime rate fell in 2025. I am skeptical of someone who touts their own work is so significant without giving any data from 2020-2024. A web site with statistics would help us see more information.

The drop in crime is not likely one persons efforts. Credit also needs to be given to the hard working police officers in blue working the streets day after day. I also believe the operation of ICE agents and Trump administration policies to arrest and deport illegal aliens has something to do with the drop in crime. I read over 2,200 criminal illegals in Michigan, have been arrested and are being deported. I also would like to know if the Detroit Police Department and the County Prosecuter improved operation and had any impact on the drop in crime rate. I believe the professor leaving others out of the equation tells me she is looking for the limelight and all the credit.

Dan Lundgren
Kalamazoo MI

Mass Deportation Is Wrong In So Many Ways

Dear Editor:

On Saturday, January 24, federal immigration enforcement agents killed another U.S. citizen in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This victim's name is Alex Pretti – a nurse working in the intensive care unit at the Veterans Administration hospital. Perhaps you have seen the many videos of the killing. He was directing traffic and using his phone to record video of a protest against the brutal and illegal tactics employed by Trump's ICE and Border Patrol agents. An agent near Mr. Pretti pushed a woman to the ground and he moved to help her. The agent discharged pepper spray directly into his face and, with the help of several other agents, wrestled him to the ground. In the ensuing scuffle, agents discovered that Mr. Pretti had a handgun, which he was legally permitted to carry, in a holster on his hip. One agent removed the handgun from the holster, then another agent shot Mr. Pretti. In the next few seconds, as he lay motionless on the ground, agents fired 9 more shots into his body.

As they did with the killing of Renee Good earlier this month, the administration immediately, and falsely, claimed that the dead person was at fault; that Mr. Pretti had brought his gun to the protest with the intent to kill as many agents as possible and that the agents fired "defensive shots". The video evidence clearly shows that many agents were nearby and could have been shot, if that was his intent. However, the video evidence also clearly shows that the only item ever in his hand was his phone.

The administration's mass deportation initiative is wrong in so many ways.

•The agents use unnecessary brutality and violence when apprehending subjects;

•The agents violate the 1st Amendment by subjecting peaceful protesters to arrest, tear gas, beatings, pepper balls, and rubber bullets; 2 people have been killed this month alone;

•The agents violate the 4th Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure by entering homes and cars without a judicial warrant or other probable cause;

•The agents violate the 14th Amendment requirement that no person can be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process by relocating detainees to unknown places within hours of apprehension and without opportunity to contact family members or an attorney.

•The agents operate as paramilitary units wearing body armor, masks, and without identification;

•The agents operate without accountability as shown by the Secretary of Homeland Security's refusal to allow independent investigations of their violent actions;

•The Department of Homeland Security has illegally detained U.S. citizens;

•The Department of Homeland Security illegally detains and deports undocumented immigrants that have followed our laws while seeking asylum.

•The U.S. Attorney General has now stated that one of the conditions for ceasing the DHS operation in Minnesota is for the state to turn over to the federal government the state's voting records. This is not immigration law enforcement; it is extortion.

These are just the legal reasons the mass deportation effort is wrong.

The entire idea of mass deportation is based on lies. The administration has demonized undocumented immigrants as being dangerous and a drain on the economy. Yet, instead of seeking out and deporting violent criminals to make communities safer as promised, the administration has established quotas for the number of deportees that can only be met by detaining and deporting undocumented immigrants with no criminal history. Non-violent immigrants of all varieties start businesses that create jobs; they work in jobs most citizens don't want and pay taxes, including payroll taxes that support Social Security and Medicare benefits most will never receive. Nor do they qualify for other benefits like SNAP.

Immigrants come here for the same things we all want – a safe place to live with opportunities to provide for our families. Deporting immigrants does not make us safer. It makes us poorer – economically, culturally, and morally.

Tim Martin – Decatur Township

P.S. The DOJ has been violating the law since December 19, 2025. Release the Epstein FIles!!

Should print person's name

Dear Editor:

Regarding the "Person falls into Lake Michigan while walking on ice shelf" story in the1/29/26 paper.

I wish you'd publish the person's name. Public shaming is sometimes needed to get the point across that it was a dangerous and ignorant thing to do.

The person needlessly endangered first responders and other lives.

Thank you,
Gregory Blackwell

THE COURIER LEADER
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PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY WILCOX NEWSPAPERS, LLC
PO Box 189, Allegan, MI 49010
(269) 657-3072 • wilcoxnewspapers.com

Publisher - Mike Wilcox
Graphics- Liz LaValle
Reporter - Paul Garrod & James Windell
IT - Jordan Wilcox

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SHHS basketball undefeated going into Feb

South Haven boys basketball is off to a great start with an unbeaten record (11-0) thru Jan. 30. They are on top of the Lakeshore division of the Southwest Athletic Conference at 5-0.

Paw Paw wrestlers place

Paw Paw wrestlers placed at an invitational last weekend. Above, Kholby Armijo was the 165# Champ.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

PAW PAW — The Paw Paw wrestling team took to the Greater Berrien county Invitational this past Friday and Saturday.

The team took 4 boys in Saturday's Varsity tournament and walked away in 14th place out of 23 teams with 52.5 points. Kholby Armijo was the 165# Champ and Gunner Gale took 3rd place.

Victor Armijo is the Paw Paw Head Varsity coach.

Paw Paw will be at the Southwest 10 Wrestling Invitational on Feb. 7 and also at the Wolverine Conference meet.

The districts are next week.

Gobles girls have big day

The Gobles girl wrestlers had another big day.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

GOBLES — The Gobles Girls wrestlers were in action at Hamilton on Friday night. "The girls were tougher than ever, four out of five girls came home with hardware, and three of them being first year wrestlers," coach Dan Morris said. "Freedom Morris wrestled her first tournament since enduring a twisted ankle two weeks ago. She worked through the pain and won her first match by pin, and her second by sudden victory in overtime, securing her first gold medal of the season.

"Yehtzi Garica hit the mats this week for the first time since she suffered what was thought to be a season ending elbow injury the first week of December. She wrestled tough and got the first takedown of her first match back. She received our wrestler of the week honors for showing grit and determination through uncertain circumstances. She took bronze and her first medal of the year.

"Ashlyn Myers came out hot and set the pace most of the day. When she was on the mat, she was assertive and controlled both of the matches she won. She secured a 4th place finish and medal. Jasmine Gutierrez wrestled very well and continues to get better daily. Using her strength to her advantage, she won two of four matches by pin. Jasmine also brought home a 4th place medal."

The girls travel to Plainwell on Friday for the new all area conference tournament.

Gobles wrestling wins Fennville Invitational by 70 points

Finn Carlin and Colton Collingsworth both earned their 100th wins for Gobles

By John Raffel
Corespondent

GOBLES — Gobles wrestling won the Fennville Invitational by 70 points last week.

Finn Carlin, Danny Timms, Brody Marshall, Devin Doorlag. Colton Collingsworth, and Aiden Dukes each fought through their respective divisions to secure gold medals.

Sixteen schools were competing at the Fennville Invitational.

In addition to the teams six gold medalist, the team's depth was further showcased by Bryce Doorlag and Hunter Piper, who earned silver medals after strong runs to the finals. Justin Ray rounded out the performance by placing fourth in his bracket.

"The squad showcased sound fundamentals on Saturday, but more importantly, they demonstrated a significant leap in mental toughness. While their performance on the mat is a testament to their physical training, their unwavering focus proves these athletes truly grasp the vital role of mental preparation in competition," coach Erin Carlin said.

Finn Carlin and Colton Collingsworth both earned their 100th wins.

Mattawan girls fall to BC Central

By John Raffel

MATTAWAN — Mattawan celebrated Snowcoming Friday night by hosting Battle Creek Central and lost 51-49.

Mattawan hadn't played in two weeks after canceling the previous four games due to weather while BC Central played Thursday night against Loy Norrix.

Mattawan led 12-9 after the first and the half ended 19-19 after BC Central hit a 3 at the buzzer.

BC Central took a 34-29 lead into the 4th, but Mattawan rallied to tie the game 39-39 on two Caitlin Ryan free throws in the closing seconds.

In the first OT Mattawan was able to build a 3 point advantage before Za'Kariana Caldwell hit a big 3 to tie the game at 44 in the final 20 seconds.

In the second OT BC Central got seven points from Kyliera Guest while Caitlin Ryan had five for Mattawan as BC Central won 51-49.

Mattawan falls to 0-6 in league play (2-7 overall), but five of those losses are by five points or less. Mattawan was led by Ryan with 20 and Charlotte Douglass with 10.

BC Central, 8-4 (6-3 league) was led by Guest with 28, including 9/12 from the FT line.

Bangor girls are 7-6

By John Raffel
Correspondent

BANGOR — Bangor's girls basketball team came into this week with a 7-6 record after a thrilling 47-44 win over Marcellus on Jan. 30 in overtime.

Alex Wiśniewski led Bangor with 22 points while M. Lennox had seven points and Izzy Horvath six points.

Cielo Maldonado had 12 rebounds while Amiyah Corona had six.

Wisniewski had six steals and Izzy Horvath had five steals and four assists.

Bangor led 10-9 after the first quarter and trailed 22-15 at halftime. Bangor led 31-30 after the third quarter and it was tied 39-39 after regulation. Bangor had an 8-5 advantage in overtime.

The day before. Bangor lost 45-33 to Lawrence. Maldonado had nine points, seven rebounds and two steals.

Wieniewski had eight points and Horvath had seven points. Corona had nine rebounds. Maldonado had seven birds and two steals Wisniewski had two steals and two assists.

Bloomingdale boys defeat White Pigeon

By John Raffel
Correspondent

BLOOMINGDALE — Bloomingdale boys basketball put on an offensive showcase Thursday night, defeating White Pigeon 84-66.

"The Cardinals played at a blistering pace, pushing the ball in transition and overwhelming White Pigeon with constant pressure, resulting in the program's highest team scoring output in seven years," coach Mark Parsley said.

"Bloomingdale had eight different players score in the game, led by a dominant performance from Javon Pittsley, who poured in a game-high 36 points.

"Pittsley was relentless in the open floor and efficient in half-court sets, setting the tone offensively all night," Parsley added. "Aiden Byers orchestrated the offense early, piling up assists in the first half before shifting gears and taking over as a scorer in the second half. Byers finished with 21 points, showcasing his ability to impact the game in multiple ways."

Parsley said Ryder Flynn added a strong offensive night, recording his best scoring performance of the season with nine points. Flynn attacked the basket aggressively and capitalized on his opportunities in transition.

"With its fast-paced style and balanced scoring, Bloomingdale controlled the tempo throughout and turned defense into offense to secure the 84-66 victory," Parsley said.

With the win, the Cardinals improve to 9-4 on the season and were looking to climb back to the top of the Southwest 10 Conference when they hosted Cassopolis in the Winterfest game.

"Javon Pittsley is also on watch to reach a major milestone, sitting just 39 points shy of 1,000 for his varsity career," Parsley said. "The Cardinals will need the energy of the home crowd for this important conference matchup—come out and support Bloomingdale as they continue their push in the Southwest 10 race."

Gobles cheerleaders take fifth

By John Raffel
Correspondent

GOBLES — After a snowy few weeks and multiple cancellations, Gobles competitive cheerleaders ladies hit the road to Parchment on Jan. 29 for League Meet No. 3, holding strong in fifth place out of 11.

"With changes at every meet, this team continues to work hard and come together. Traveling to Coloma on Feb. 2 after just one day of practice, this young team earned their highest score of the season," coach Sarah Ashbrook said.

The objective in the three rounds is as follows:

Round 1: Cheerleaders show off their jumping skills and ability to choreograph motions.

Round 2: Cheerleaders perform a precision drill, tumbling, jumping, and flexibility.

Round 3: Cheerleaders perform stunts.

Gobles girls undefeated.

Gobles girls basketball team won 51-34 over Climx Scotts and 40-34 over Delton Kellogg in recent action. The girls are 12-0 overall and 6-0 in the league.

Mattawan hockey team tops Jenison

By John Raffel
Correspondent

MATTAWAN — The hockey team beat the Jenison Wildcats 4-0 in the 14th Annual Hockey Fights for Kids with Autism event at Wings Event Center recentl. It was a great, day-long event filled with silent auction raffles, chuck a pucks, and most importantly Autism education and raised awareness, team spokesperson Jon Stork said.

The Wildcats were led by Honorary Captain Kenny Kemp.

"Kenny, wearing his No. 77 Mattawan hockey jersey, performed the ceremonial puck drop and motivated the team to victory. Kenny is a huge hockey fan and also a member of Mattawan's JV Football and Varsity Bowling teams," Stork said.

After a scoreless first period, Griffin Davis opened the scoring for the Wildcats at 14:48 of the 2nd period by netting his 15th goal of the season. Ben Edington made it 2-0 with his team leading 17th goal with 5:10 remaining in the 2nd.

In the 3rd period, George Nulty added a shorthanded goal and Sawyer Brewster closed out the Wildcat scoring on a shot from the point at 6:39 in the 3rd.

Next up for the 16-5-2 Wildcats was the Portage Muskies in a battle for the Renbarger Cup, an annual event honoring former Mattawan student Ryan Renbarger. It was a 1-1 tie.

Mattawan lost 4-1 to Utica Eisenhower on Jan. 29 and 2-0 to Houghton on Jan. 30 in the MIHL Showcase in Trenton.

Mattawan athlete is MHSAA finalist

By John Raffel
Correspondent

MATTAWAN — Marcel Stork of Mattawan is among the 120 finalists for the Michigan High School Athletic Association's Scholar-Athlete Awards for the 2025-26 school year, presented by Farm Bureau Insurance, it has been announced.

The program, in its 37th year, has recognized student-athletes since the 1989-90 school year and again this winter will honor 32 individuals from MHSAA member schools who participate in at least one sport in which the Association sponsors a postseason tournament.

Farm Bureau Insurance underwrites the Scholar-Athlete Awards and will present a $2,000 scholarship to each recipient. Since the beginning of the program, 991 scholarships have been awarded.

Scholarships will be presented proportionately by school classification, with 12 scholarships to be awarded to Class A student-athletes, six female and six male; eight scholarships awarded to Class B student-athletes, four female and four male; six scholarships awarded to Class C student-athletes, three female and three male; and four scholarships awarded to Class D student-athletes, two female and two male. In addition, two scholarships will be awarded at-large to minority recipients, regardless of school size.

Every MHSAA member high school could submit as many applications as there are scholarships available in its classification and could have more than one finalist. This year, 95 schools have a finalist, with Birmingham Groves and Flint Powers Catholic atop the list with three apiece. Twenty-one schools have two finalists: Ann Arbor Greenhills, Bay City Central, Birch Run, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Hills Academy of the Sacred Heart, Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood, Corunna, Detroit Country Day, Frankenmuth, Grand Ledge, Holland, Holland West Ottawa, Midland Dow, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, Negaunee, Northville, Okemos, Plymouth, Royal Oak, White Lake Lakeland and Yale.

Multiple-sport participation remains the norm among applicants. The average sport participation rate of the finalists is 3.02, up from 2.88 a year ago. There also are 82 three-plus sport participants in the finalists field, up from 75 in 2024-25, and all 31 sports in which the MHSAA sponsors postseason tournaments are represented — including field hockey and boys volleyball, which joined the MHSAA's championship lineup this school year for the first time.

Of 426 schools which submitted applicants, 20 submitted the maximum allowed. This year, 1,438 applications were received. All applicants will be presented with certificates commemorating their achievement.

The applications were judged by a 72-member committee of coaches, counselors, faculty members, administrators and board members from MHSAA member schools. Selection of the 32 scholarship recipients will take place in early February. Class C and D scholarship recipients will be announced Feb. 3, Class B scholarship recipients will be announced Feb. 10 and Class A scholarship recipients will be announced Feb. 17. All announcements will be made on the MHSAA Website.

To be eligible for the award, students must have a cumulative grade-point average of 3.50 (on a 4.0 scale) and previously have won a varsity letter in at least one sport in which the MHSAA sponsors a postseason tournament. Students also were asked to respond to a series of short essay questions and submit two letters of recommendation and a 500-word essay on the importance of sportsmanship in educational athletics.

Athletic directors give views on NIL expansion

By John Raffel

PAW PAW — Athletic directors locally gave their views after it was announced last week the Representative Council of the Michigan High School Athletic Association has approved an expansion of personal branding activities (PBA) – also commonly referred to as Name-Image-Likeness (NIL) – allowing student-athletes at MHSAA member schools, effective immediately, to potentially benefit from such opportunities.

The MHSAA said it previously allowed some PBA opportunities, including the abilities for student-athletes to conduct camps, clinics and private lessons. The expanded policy allows student-athletes to capitalize on PBA through several more options as long as those activities are individual opportunities for individual students – while not disrupting competitive equity that would result from the creations of group activities including collectives and other pay-for-play opportunities now the norm at the collegiate level.

The MHSAA noted that the topic of PBA/NIL had been discussed at length with membership over the last three years during MHSAA Update meetings and various other conferences with schools and their administrators. The Council had debated the possibility of these rule changes since the Michigan Legislature proposed amending state law to allow for student-athletes' use of NIL in 2023, and also after closely monitoring similar developments in surrounding states.

"We have said from the start of this conversation that the MHSAA could be comfortable with a policy that provides individual branding opportunities for individual student-athletes, and this rule change provides those while excluding the possibility of collectives, and boosters and school people getting involved in those activities," MHSAA Executive Director Mark Uyl said in a statement.. "This is the essence of what NIL was supposed to allow in the first place, and we're confident we've crafted language that allows true NIL opportunities without affecting competitive equity among our member schools."

Additional activities allowed by the new PBA policy include social media endorsements and promotions, personal appearances, photo sessions or autograph signings; modeling, advertising, merchandise, sports cards or apparel sales; and the use of a student's name, image or likeness in marketing materials.

Alan Farnquist is Paw Paw athletic director.

"My immediate thought is that it could keep kids in Michigan that might otherwise leave (to states that allowed NIL). It may create animosity or divisiveness between athletes, and could potentially cause ineligibility issues if it's not done properly. I already had social media blowing up last night with a couple of business owners licking their chops).

"We're a small enough community where local businesses may 'sign' athletes to these deals as a way to make them look/feel big time. I really wish the MHSAA had given us warning about this, and have educated us ahead of time so that we can properly educate our kids, coaches, and communities on what can and can't happen now."

Fred Smith is Bangor's athletic director.

"Since I sit on the MHSAA Representative Council and have been in on the discussions about NIL in Michigan the past three years, I am in full support of the decision to allow high school athletes the opportunity to earn money from 'Personal Branding Activities'.

æThis policy brings the MHSAA in step with 46 other states. By the MHSAA developing the policy rather than the legislature, they were able to control the opportunities for student athletes. This allows an individual athlete to earn money through social media endorsements, personal appearances, photo sessions, autograph signings, modeling, advertising, merchandise, sports cards and apparel sales.

"The Personal Branding Activity is driven by the individual, not the school. It must be approved by the MHSAA seven days prior. The only cons would be when individuals try to stretch the rules. However, the MHSAA experiences that in all of their rules. Penalty for abusing the PBA by an individual school could result in expulsion from the MHSAA. I do not believe this will impact most schools in Southwest Michigan. This policy is really for the 'elite' athlete."

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=• PUBLIC NOTICE •=

Almena Township
SYNOPSIS
December 17, 2025
Almena Township Board meeting was held December 17, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.
Attendance: Kelly Redmond, Tim Kloosterman, Mark Roman, Scott Rueff, John Wagner, Sandra Rickli, Joe Leduc.

- Motion passed to approve amended agenda
- Motion passed to approve meeting minutes of November 19, 2025
- Disbursements approved in the amount of $249,471.34
- Sheriff's Department report
- Public comment offered
- Reports by officers presented
- Motion passed to approve Almena Township Senior Services Reimbursement Policy
- Motion to approve purchase of 49.5 acres (Hayden Creek)
- Motion to approve proposed Paw Paw Fire Department 2026-2027 budget
- Motion to approve $50 contribution to the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
- Public comment offered
- Meeting adjourned 7:28pm

Sandra Rickli, Clerk, Almena Township

State of Michigan
Probate Court
Van Buren County
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S ESTATE
Case no. 2025-1186-DE
Judge Hon. Susan Metzger
ESTATE OF LYNETTE ALANA DEBOW
DATE OF BIRTH: JANUARY 8,1975 (01/08/1975)
TO ALL CREDITORS: including any and all creditors whose addresses and whereabouts are unknown.
NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Lynette Alana Debow, died August 18,2022 (08/18/2022). Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Makayla DeBow, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 Paw Paw Street, Suite 220, Paw Paw, Mi 49079 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.
01/27/2026
Attorney:
Peter Schinkai P86330
4709 Cedarcrest Avenue
Portage, MI 49024
616-613-6777
Personal Representative:
Makayla DeBow
2424 Woodward Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49004
269-910-0948

STATE OF MICHIGAN
IN THE COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF VAN BUREN
IN THE MATTER OF CAYSON ROYCE GURITZ,
CASE NO. 2025-004747-AY
HON. SUSAN D. METZGER (P62867)
Angie J. Bailey-Hobbs (P80702)
LENNON MILLER PLC
Attorney for Petitioners
151 S. Rose St., Ste. 900
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269) 381-8844
abailey-hobbs@lennonmiller.com
NOTICE OF HEARING
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that a hearing will be held on March 3, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. before Judge Susan Durian Metzger at the Van Buren County Circuit Court, Courtroom Three, Courthouse Annex, 212 Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, MI 49079, for the following Purpose: Hearing to Terminate
Parental Rights of Putative Father.
This Hearing will be held via Zoom. Zoom Meeting ID: 277 444 5820
Dated: 2-2-2026
Respectfully Submitted, LENNON MILLER PLC
Angie J. Bailey-Hobbs (P80702)
Attorney for Petitioners

State of Michigan
36th Circuit Court
For the County of Van Buren
2025-07514140-CZ
HONORABLE SUSAN D. METZGER (P62867)
SHIRLEY GANT,
PLAINTIFF,
V
LECHIA CONRAD and THE ESTATE OF ANTHONY A. GANT,
Defendants

Justin Breithaupt (P81259)
Attorney for Plaintiff
Herbert Machnik Law Firm 5830 Venture Park Drive Kalamazoo, MI 49009
(269) 459-1432

EX PARTE ORDER FOR ALTERNATE SERVICE
At a session of said Court held in the City of Paw Paw, County of Van Buren, State of Michigan, on the 12th day of December, 2025.
PRESENT: Honorable Susan Metzger
After reviewing Plaintiffs' Motion for Alternate Service, and the Court being fully advised in the premises. The court finds, pursuant to MCR 2,106(D)(1) and MCR 2.201(D)(3) that service of process by publication is the best available method of service of process reasonably calculated to give Defendants Lechia Conrad and The Estate of Anthony A. Gant actual notice of the proceedings and an opportunity to be heard.
IT IS ORDERED:
Plaintiff may serve process on Defendants Lechia Conrad and the Estate of Anthony A Gant by publication pursuant to MCR 2.106(D)(1) and MCR 2.201(D)(3). The publication will be done by Wilcox Papers (The Courier-Leader) Van Buren County and shall be published for (3) consecutive weeks:
"An action seeking to quiet title to the property located at CR 687, South Haven, MI 49090 in favor of Plaintiff Shirely Gant has been commenced against Lechia Conrad and the Estate of Anthony A Gant in the Van Buren 36th Circuit Court for the State of Michigan. Defendant must answer or take other action permitted by law within 28 days after the last date of publication of this notice. If a Defendant does not answer or take other action within the time allowed, judgment affecting the Defendant's interests may be entered as requested in the Complaint."
Plaintiff shall also affix a copy of the summons and complaint to the door of the subject property. 03331 CR 687, South Haven, MI 49090.
This is not a final order and does not close the case.
Dated 12/12/2025
Honorable Susan Metzger

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Mervin E Mortimore Jr; Atty: BETTER CHOICE NOTICE SOLUTIONS - BETTER CHOICE NOTICE SOLUTIONS; 1st Pub: 2/5/2026; Atty File #: 25-34417; Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following Mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 01:00 PM, on March 12, 2026. The amount due on the Mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default has been made in the conditions of a Mortgage made by Mervin E. Mortimore, Jr. Marr and Lori Mortimore Marr to Fifth Third Bank (Western Michigan) dated September 9, 2003 and recorded September 25, 2003 in Liber 1396 at Page 631, Van Buren County, Michigan. Said Mortgage is now held by Fifth Third Bank, National Association by assignment and/or merger. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of $66,383.42. Said premises are located in Van Buren County, Michigan and are described as: 04048925/74201 28th Street, Lawton, MI, 49065 Property located in the Township of Porter, County of Van Buren, State of Michigan Parcel # 80-16-003-011-00 THE NORTH 17 3/8 ACRES OF THE WEST 136 ACRES OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 3, TOWN 4 SOUTH, RANGE 13 WEST, ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT SURVEY THEREOF. INSURANCE Said property is commonly known as 74201 28TH ST, Lawton, MI 49065. The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period. TO ALL PURCHASERS: The foreclosing mortgagee can rescind the sale. In that event, your damages, if any, are limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. Please be advised that any third party purchaser is responsible for preparing and recording the Sheriff's Deed. If this is a residential Mortgage, the following shall apply: ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the Mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. THIS COMMUNICATION IS FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR. THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT, AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. IF YOU: ARE A DEBTOR IN AN ACTIVE BANKRUPTCY CASE; ARE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF A BANKRUPTCY STAY; OR, HAVE RECEIVED A DISCHARGE IN BANKRUPTCY AND YOU HAVE NOT REAFFIRMED THE DEBT, THIS NOTICE IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT FROM YOU PERSONALLY. Dated: January 29, 2026 Attorney for the party foreclosing the Mortgage: Thomas E. McDonald (P39312) Brock & Scott, PLLC 5431 Oleander Drive Wilmington, NC 28403 PHONE: (844) 856-6646 File No. 25-34417
(02-05)(02-26)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Kevin R. Brown; Atty: Orlans; 1st Pub: 2/5/2026; Atty File #: 26-000823; Insurer: GNMA
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM on MARCH 5, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Kevin R. Brown, a married man, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Mortgage 1 Incorporated, Mortgagee, dated May 25, 2022 and recorded May 27, 2022 in Liber 1738, Page 661 Van Buren County Records, Michigan. Said mortgage is now held by Siwell Inc. DBA Capital Mortgage Services of Texas, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of One Hundred Ninety-Eight Thousand One Hundred Sixty-Six and 69/100 Dollars ($198,166.69). Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue at the place of holding the circuit court within Van Buren County, Michigan at 1:00 PM on MARCH 5, 2026.
Said premises are located in the Township of Almena, Van Buren County Michigan, and are described as:
Lot 9, FILIPUNAS PLAT, according to the plat thereof as recorded in Liber 5 of Plats, Page 100, Van Buren County Records.
47041 County Road 653, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period.
Dated: February 5, 2026
File No. 26-000823
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400
(02-05)(02-26)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Phyllicia Eubanks; Atty: Team J; 1st Pub: 2/5/2026; Atty File #: 512288F04; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on March 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Phyllicia J. Eubanks, a single woman
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): U.S. BANK TRUST NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, NOT IN ITS INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUT SOLELY AS OWNER TRUSTEE FOR RCF 2 EBO TRUST
Date of Mortgage: February 13, 2020
Date of Mortgage Recording: February 21, 2020
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $251,108.77
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Village of Lawton, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: LOT 9, NORTH POINT WOODS, AS RECORDED IN LIBER 8 OF PLATS, PAGE 167, VAN BUREN COUNTY RECORDS.
Common street address (if any): 1015 Point Way, Lawton, MI 49065-8797
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: February 5, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1583929
(02-05)(02-26)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: RON CRAFT; Atty: Schneiderman & Sherman, P.C. - Schneiderman & Sherman, PC; 1st Pub: 1/29/2026; Atty File #: 25-002098-3; Insurer: (unknown)
SHORT FORECLOSURE NOTICE - VAN BUREN COUNTY
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on February 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): RON CRAFT and SUZANNE BURROWS-CRAFT, Husband and Wife Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS"), solely as nominee for lender and lender`s successors and assigns
Date of mortgage: April 28, 2004
Recorded on May 11, 2004, Liber 1413, on Page 644, Foreclosing Assignee (if any): THE BANK OF NEW YORK MELLON FKA THE BANK OF NEW YORK, AS TRUSTEE FOR THE CERTIFICATEHOLDERS OF THE CWABS INC., ASSET-BACKED CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2004-6
Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: Fifty-Five Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty-Five and 24/100 Dollars ($55,785.24)
Mortgaged premises: Situated in Van Buren County, and described as: BEGINNING ON THE NORTH LINE OF CASS STREET AT A POINT 465.00 FEET EAST OF THE WEST SECTION LINE; THENCE WEST, 102.00 FEET; THENCE NORTH, 86.50 FEET; THENCE SOUTHEASTERLY PARALLEL WITH MONROE STREET, 112.20 FEET; THENCE SOUTHERLY TO BEGINNING, BEING A PART OF BLOCK 8, MONROE`S ADDITION TO THE CITY OF BANGOR, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN AS RECORDED IN LIBER 1 OF PLATS, PAGE 17, VAN BUREN COUNTY RECORDS. Commonly known as 108 E Cass St, Bangor, MI 49013 The redemption period will be 6 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the above referenced property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. The Bank of New York Mellon fka The Bank of New York, as Trustee for Certificateholders of the CWABS Inc., Asset-Backed Certificates, Series 2004-6 Mortgagee/ Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400
1583433
(01-29)(02-19)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Mark A Redfern; Atty: Johnson, Blumberg, and Associates - Johnson, Blumberg, and Associates ; 1st Pub: 1/29/2026; Atty File #: MI 26 6935; Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE BY ADVERTISEMENT. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in VAN BUREN County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on February 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
MORTGAGE INFORMATION: Default has been made in the conditions of a certain mortgage made by Mark A. Redfern and Lori Redfern, husband and wife, whose address is 52757 48th Avenue, Lawrence, Michigan 49064, as original Mortgagors, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Caliber Home Loans, Inc., being a mortgage dated July 6, 2018, and recorded on July 10, 2018 in Liber 1670 Page 995, Van Buren County Records, State of Michigan and then assigned through mesne assignments to NewRez LLC d/b/a Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing, as assignee as documented by an assignment dated November 8, 2023 and recorded on November 8, 2023 in Liber 1759 Page 25, Van Buren County Records, Michigan, on which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED SEVENTY-TWO AND 39/100 DOLLARS ($166,872.39). Said premises are situated in the Township of Lawrence, County of Van Buren, State of Michigan, and are described as: PART OF THE NORTHEAST FRACTIONAL QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 4, TOWN 3 SOUTH, RANGE 15 WEST, LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS COMMENCING AT THE NORTH QUARTER POST OF SAID SECTION 4: THENCE EAST ALONG THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 716.50 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF A PARCEL OF LAND DESCRIBED IN A QUIT CLAIM DEED RECORDED IN LIBER 1133 ON PAGE 991 AND THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE CONTINUING EAST ALONG SAID NORTH LINE 15.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" EAST, PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION 393.42 FEET; THENCE WEST PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 25.40 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" EAST, PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION 390.00 FEET; THENCE EAST PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 458.00 FEET TO A LINE WHICH IS 1164.10 FEET EAST OF AND PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION; THENCE SOUTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" EAST, ALONG THE LAST DESCRIBED LINE 676.565 FEET TO THE SOUTH LINE OF THE NORTH FRACTIONAL HALF OF SAID NORTHEAST FRACTIONAL QUARTER, ALSO BEING THE SOUTH LINE OF A PARCEL OF LAND DESCRIBED IN A MEMORANDUM OF LAND CONTRACT RECORDED IN LIBER 1046 ON PAGE 21; THENCE NORTH 89 DEGREES 26' 32" WEST, ALONG SAID SOUTH LINE 488.08 FEET TO A LINE WHICH IS 676.10 FEET EAST OF AND PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION, ALSO BEING THE WEST LINE OF A PARCEL OF LAND DESCRIBED IN A WARRANTY DEED RECORDED IN LIBER 0878 ON PAGE 038 OF VAN BUREN COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE NORTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" WEST, ALONG THE LAST DESCRIBED LINE, 1237.233 FEET TO A LINE WHICH IS 218 FEET SOUTHERLY OF AND PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION; THENCE EAST ALONG THE LAST DESCRIBED LINE 40.40 FEET TO A LINE WHICH IS 716.50 FEET EAST OF AND PARALLEL WITH THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION, ALSO BEING THE WEST LINE OF A PARCEL OF LAND DESCRIBED IN A QUIT CLAIM DEED RECORDED IN LIBER 1133 ON PAGE 991 OF VAN BUREN COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE NORTH 00 DEGREES 40' 29" WEST, ALONG THE FAST DESCRIBED LINE 218.00 FEET TO THE PLACE OF BEGINNING. Street Address: 52757 48th Avenue, Lawrence, Michigan 49064 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless the property is determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA § 600.3241a in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of the sale. If the property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCLA § 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. THIS FIRM IS A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION WE OBTAIN WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: IF YOU ARE A MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER ON ACTIVE DUTY, IF YOUR PERIOD OF ACTIVE DUTY HAS CONCLUDED LESS THAN 90 DAYS AGO, OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY, PLEASE CONTACT THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PARTY FORECLOSING THE MORTGAGE AT THE TELEPHONE NUMBER STATED IN THIS NOTICE. Dated: January 29, 2026 For more information, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing: Robert A. Blumberg (P87490), Johnson, Blumberg, & Associates, LLC, 30 North LaSalle St., Suite 3650 Chicago, Illinois, 60602. Telephone: (312) 541-9710 File No.: MI 26 6935
(01-29)(02-19)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Matthew Craig; Atty: Team X; 1st Pub: 1/29/2026; Atty File #: 527625F01; Insurer: FNMA
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on February 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Matthew Craig an unmarried man
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns Foreclosing Assignee (if any): NewRez LLC d/b/a Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing
Date of Mortgage: January 25, 2017
Date of Mortgage Recording: January 30, 2017
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $71,503.15
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Paw Paw, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: The Southwest 1/4 of Section 36, Town 3 South, Range 14 West, described as: beginning at the Southwest corner of said Section 36; thence North 00 degrees 28 minutes 57 seconds West, along the West line of said section, 990.0 feet; thence South 89 degrees 56 minutes 07 seconds East, 440.00 feet; thence South 00 degrees 28 minutes 57 seconds East, parallel with the West line of said section, 990.004 feet to the South line of said section; thence North 89 degrees 56 minutes 04 seconds West along said South line 440.00 feet to the place of beginning.
Common street address (if any): 35910 72nd Ave, Decatur, MI 49045-8700
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure

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TOWNSHIP OF ALMENA
2026 NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Board of Review will meet at the Township Hall, 27625 CR 375, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079, to examine and review the 2026 Assessment Roll. The board will convene on the following dates for the hearing of appeals of assessments or taxable values, poverty exemptions, parcel classification appeals and/or current year qualified agricultural denials:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 7:00 am Organizational Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026, 9:00 am to Noon and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Thursday, March 12, 2026, Noon to 3:00 pm and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm

and on such additional days as required to hear all persons who have given notice of the desire to be heard until assessment rolls have been revised, corrected and approved.

APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED. Contact the Assessor at 269-655-1144 or by email at ***BEN.APGLLC@GMAIL.COM*** for further information. Letter appeals will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 pm March 12, 2026. Address listed below.

Tentative ratios and estimated multipliers for 2026 are as follows:

Agricultural	50.58%	0.9885
Commercial	45.12%	1.1082
Industrial	52.48%	0.9527
Residential	46.84%	1.0675
Personal Property	50.00%	1.0000

Tentative equalization factor of 1.0000 for all classes is expected after completion of Board of Review.

Joe Leduc, Supervisor Almena Township
Ben Brousseau, Assessor Almena Township

Almena Township Board Meetings are open to all without regard to race, national origin, sex or disability.

American with Disabilities (ADA) Notice
The township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to Almena Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact Almena Township by writing or calling.

Sandra Rickli
Almena Township Clerk
27625 County Road 375
Paw Paw, MI 49079
269.668.6910

=• PUBLIC NOTICE •=

Continues from page 9

sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: January 29, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1582776

(01-29)(02-19)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Logan Phillips; Atty: PUBLIC NOTICE AGENCY - PUBLIC NOTICE AGENCY; 1st Pub: 1/15/2026; Atty File #: 25-017305; Insurer: (unknown) Notice of Foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 01:00 PM on February 12, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Logan Phillips, a single man Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Success Mortgage Partners, Inc., a Michigan Corporation Date of mortgage: April 12, 2019, Recorded on April 19, 2019, Book # 1683, on Page # 91. Foreclosing Assignee: Lakeview Loan Servicing, LLC. Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: One Hundred Seventy Thousand Nine Hundred Sixty-Three 88/100 Dollars ($107,963.88) Mortgaged premises: Located in the Township of Decatur, County of Van Buren: LOT 6, BLOCK 2, DOUGLAS LEE ADDITION TO THE VILLAGE OF DECATUR, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF, AS RECORDED IN LIBER 4 OF PLATS ON PAGE 19, VAN BUREN COUNTY RECORDS. Commonly known as 455 Douglas Dr Decatur MI 49045 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961 pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Lakeview Loan Servicing, LLC Assignee ALAW 5404 Cypress Center Drive, Suite 300, Tampa, FL 33609 (813) 221-4743 25-017305

(01-15)(02-05)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Helen Burton; Atty: Team H; 1st Pub: 1/15/2026; Atty File #: 527692F01; Insurer: (unknown) Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on February 19, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Helen L. Burton and Eddie J. Burton, wife and husband
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Lakeview Loan Servicing, LLC
Date of Mortgage: May 4, 2022
Date of Mortgage Recording: May 9, 2022
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $191,261.14
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Arlington, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: Beginning on the West 1/4 post of Section 18, Town 2 South, Range 15 West, Arlington Township, Van Buren County, Michigan; thence South on the West line of said Section, 589.60 feet; thence East at right angles, 515.00 feet; thence North 589.60 feet; thence West 515.00 feet to the place beginning.
Except Beginning at the West 1/4 post of Section 18, Town 2 South, Range 15 West, Arlington Township, Van Buren County, Michigan; thence South 00 degrees 07 minutes 46 seconds West on the West section line, 208.00 feet; thence South 89 degrees 26 minutes 59 seconds East, parallel with the East and West 1/4 line, 515.00 feet; thence North 00 degrees 07 minutes 46 seconds East 208.00 feet to the East and West 1/4 line; thence North 89 degrees 26 minutes 59 seconds West on same, 515.00 feet to the place of beginning.
Common street address (if any): 34315 County Road 681, Bangor, MI 49013-9776
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: January 15, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1581941

(01-15)(02-05)

VILLAGE OF MATTAWAN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Village of Mattawan Council will hold a Public Hearing to consider a levy of up to six (6) mills, an increase of one (1) mill on the current millage rate, or other such amount as determined by the Village Council, to provide support for police operations and capital improvements within the district. This action would be in compliance with Public Act 33 of 1951. The current levy is five (5) mills. The Council shall consider any appropriate levy.

The Special Assessment District will include the same boundaries as the incorporated village and the tax levy will be on all "real" property, not "personal property".

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that a Public Hearing on said request will be held on ***Monday, February 23, 2026 before the Village Council at 7:00 p.m.*** in the Village meeting room at which time all interested persons will be given an opportunity to be heard.

The meeting will be held at the address below. Please send all written comments to:

Village of Mattawan
24221 Front Avenue
Mattawan, MI 49071
(269) 668-2128
offices@mattawanmi.com

Jolie Storm-Artis
Village Clerk

NOTICE OF RESCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARING ANTWERP TOWNSHIP ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

The Antwerp Township Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) will hold a public hearing regarding the following appeal of a determination by the Zoning Administrator. Public comments on the matter are welcome.

Application
- Request: Appeal of the Zoning Administrator's determination that the operation of a police department practice shooting range is not permitted at the subject property.
- Zoning District: Agricultural & Open Space Residential (AG) Zoning District
- Location: 72nd Avenue
- Parcel Number: 80-02-031-011-00
- Owner/Applicant: Village of Lawton

Rescheduled Meeting and Hearing Information
- Location: Antwerp Township offices located at 24821 Front Street, Mattawan, MI 49071
- Date: Thursday, February 26, 2026
- Time: 6:30 PM
- Project Details: call (269) 668-2615

Those unable to attend the public hearing are invited to submit written comments to the attention of the ZBA Chair at the Township Hall address listed above by 4:00 PM on the meeting date. If any individual has a physical disability that may limit their participation in the hearing, please notify the Township at least five (5) days prior to the hearing so that reasonable accommodations may be made.

Notice of Public Hearing and Public Comment Period on Arlington Township Master Plan

The Arlington Township Planning Commission will hold a public comment period ending with a public hearing at 6:00 p.m. on March 4, 2026 at Arlington Township Hall, 52022 34th Ave, Bangor, MI 49013.

The purpose of the comment period and public hearing is to invite and hear comments on the Proposed Master Plan for Arlington Township. At the hearing, all interested parties will be given an opportunity to be heard.

If you cannot attend the public hearing, written comments can be sent to Arlington Township, 52022 34th Ave, Bangor, MI 49013 or emailed to ***Supervisor@arlingtontownship.com*** and must be received by March 4, 2026.

The proposed plan can be reviewed at the Arlington Township Hall and online at ***https://tinyurl.com/ArlingtonTownshipMasterPlan*** and ***www.ArlingtonTownship.com.***

Persons needing special accommodations should contact the township prior to the meeting day by calling 269-427-7300

ALMENA TOWNSHIP VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF AN ORDINANCE ADDRESSING FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT PROVISIONS OF THE STATE CONSTRUCTION CODE

Ordinance No. 2026-01

Please take notice that on January 21, 2026, the Township Board of Almena Township adopted Ordinance No. 2026-01, an Ordinance to designate an enforcing agency to discharge the responsibility of Almena Township located to designate regulated flood hazard areas under the provisions of the State Construction Code Act, Act No. 230 of the Public Acts of 1972, as amended. A summary of the sections of this Ordinance follows:

- Section 1: Agency Designated. The Building, Electrical, Mechanical, and Planning Code Officials of the Township are designated as the enforcing agency for Almena Township on this matter.
- Section 2: Code Appendix Enforced. Pursuant to the provisions of the state construction code, in accordance with Section 8b(6) of Act 230, of the Public Acts of 1972, as amended, Appendix G of the Michigan Building Code shall be enforced by the enforcing agency within the jurisdiction of the community adopting this ordinance.
- Section 3: Designation of Regulated Flood Prone Hazard Areas. Applicable FEMA Flood Insurance Study and Flood Insurance Rate Map(s) are adopted by reference.
- Section 4: Most Restrictive Standards. If another ordinance contains standards inconsistent with the provisions of this ordinance, the most restrictive standards shall apply.
- Section 5: Publication. The Ordinance will become effective on June 10, 2026.

Copies of the complete text of the Ordinance may be obtained from Sandi Rickli at the Clerk's office at 27625 County Road 375, Paw Paw, MI 49079, or by emailing ***almenaclerk@comcast.net.***

Published by Order of the Township Board
Almena Township, Van Buren County

Sandi Rickli, Clerk
27625 County Road 375,
Paw Paw, MI 49079
(269) 668-6910

TOWNSHIP OF PINE GROVE 2026 NOTICE OF BOARD OF REVIEW

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Board of Review will meet at the Township Hall, 26520 C.R. 388, Gobles, MI 49055 to examine and review the 2026 assessment roll. The board will convene on the following dates for the hearing of appeals of assessments or taxable values, poverty exemptions, parcel classification appeals and/or current year qualified agricultural denials:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 4:30 pm Organizational Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026, 9:00 am to Noon and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Wednesday, March 11, 2026, Noon to 3:00 pm and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm

And on such additional days as required to hear all persons who have given notice of the desire to be heard until assessment rolls have been revised, corrected, and approved.

APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED. Contact the Assessor at 269-655-1144 or by email at ***BEN.APGLLC@GMAIL.COM*** for further information. Letter appeals will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 pm March 11, 2026. Address listed below.

Tentative ratios and estimated multipliers for 2026 are as follows:

Agricultural	46.50%	1.0753
Commercial	47.03%	1.0632
Industrial	48.71%	1.0265
Residential	45.97%	1.0877
Personal Property	50.00%	1.0000

Tentative equalization factor of 1.000 for all classes is expected after completion of Board of Review.

Pam Visser, Supervisor Pine Grove Township

Ben Brousseau, Assessor Pine Grove Township

Pine Grove Township Board Meetings are open to all without regard to race, national origin, sex or disability.

American with Disabilities (ADA) Notice
The township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to Pine Grove Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact Pine Grove Township by writing or calling.

Michelle Meert
Pine Grove Township Clerk
26520 C.R. 388
Gobles, MI 49055

• CLASSIFIEDS •

• WANTED •

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BANGOR, AN INDEPENDENT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, IS SEEKING A PART-TIME PASTOR to provide biblically based spiritual guidance, teachings, and sermons. Our current pastor is retiring, and we are looking to build ministries to youth, to provide a welcoming place for people of all ages, and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Inquiries may be directed to: The pastoral search committee at: jcbabyar@yahoo.com or to: First Congregational Church of Bangor - Attn: pastoral search committee P.O. Box 127 - Bangor, MI 49013.

WE BUY OLD BASEBALL CARDS, OTHER SPORTS MEMORABILIA AND OLD VINTAGE COINS. CAN BE REACHED AT 517-416-1629. WE PAY CASH.

CLARK'S AUTO PARTS, INC. is buying cars, trucks & all metals for recycling. Lawrence, 674-4905 or 1-800-707-8650.

STANDING TIMBER. Top Michigan lumber manufacturer seeking landowners with 25 or more mature hardwood trees to sell. Qualityhardwoodsinc.com • 517-566-8061.

• SERVICES •

TIM'S STUMP GRINDING SERVICE- I believe in respectable service. 269-299-5052, 269-624-6884.

HAULING, CLEANING RECYCLING. Moving service. Right Quick Hauling. Dan Wydick, Dustin Wydick, Daniel Wydick, 423-8545. Serving since 1994.

FIELD PLUMBING & HEATING, INC. Services all brands of heating & cooling equipment in your home or business. 24/7 service for over 50 years, 269-674-3839.

BUYING JUNK CARS, trucks, scrap metal and farm machinery. Kalamazoo Metal Recyclers, 1525 King Highway, Kalamazoo. 269-381-1315.

PRO HANDYMAN SERVICE
SOUTH HAVEN AREA Call 269-903-6397.

PERRY'S PERFECT PITCH PIANO TUNING
Homes-Churches-Schools, Call 269-999-4440

• AUCTIONS •

M&K MINI-STORAGE-206 RANDOLPH ST-BANGOR, MI 49013 269-427-1217 SALE OF ABANDONED PROPERTY: #125 AMY MORTENSEN, #037 BRETT COOLEY UNLESS PAID IN FULL BY FEBRUARY 7TH, 2026 BY 9:AM.

PUBLIC AUCTION FOR 2025 NISSAN SENTRA TO BE HELD AT SPIKES SERVICE OF MATTAWAN Fri. Jan. 30th at Noon. Vin # 3N1AB8CVXSY347657 Mileage- 656. Bidding will start at towing and storage charges owed - $5600.00.

• FOR SALE •

HAY FOR SALE
5 x 4 round bales, first cut, available 40 bales. Storage and inside, $50 apiece, 773-816-7120, 847-553-5418. Lawrence area.

MEDICARE INSURANCE RATES GOING UP
Call for a quote today Janet Bontrager Insurance Advisor
(269) 998-6977

SHAES in 2025 had another record year for responses

SOUTH HAVEN – South Haven Area Emergency Services (SHAES) continued a trend of increased responses, particularly medical related, during 2025, according to the department's Annual Report.

Marking its 29th year, the SHAES Authority serves the city of South Haven and the townships of Casco, Geneva and South Haven. The department is comprised of 22 full-time staff and 31 paid-on-call firefighters protecting 97 square miles of land and several miles of Lake Michigan shoreline from three stations. The department has 22 members who are licensed EMT-Paramedics, 1 EMT- Advanced, 12 EMT-Basic, 1 Emergency Medical Responder, 8 Cadets and 21 who are certified firefighter instructors.

For the twelfth consecutive year, the number of calls has increased from the previous year to a record 2,920 incidents. The previous record, set in 2024, was 2,699. It was the greatest increase in call volume from year-to-year. A decade ago (2015) the call volume was 2,183.

Four new career members were welcomed to SHAES during 2025, bringing valuable skills and fresh perspectives to the department.

"Our people are the foundation of SHAES," said executive director Brandon Hinz. "The continued growth, development and transition within our ranks reflect both opportunity and the natural evolution of a strong organization."

Annual requirements for Fire and EMS continuing education take a considerable amount of time, but are necessary in order to keep members' skills honed, according to Hinz.

In 2025 there were 2,021 calls on the medical side compared to 1,851 in 2024. Looking back a decade (2015), medical calls numbered 1,704. In 2025, 1,138 of the medical responses required Advance Life Support (ALS) services.

Last year there were 1,204 calls in the city of South Haven, followed by South Haven township 815, Casco township 470 and Geneva township 378. SHAES provided mutual aid to other fire departments and EMS agencies on 53 occasions.

Property losses from fire in 2025 dropped to $524,473compared to $812,050 the year before. Losses by governmental unit were city of South Haven, $271,273, South Haven township, $112,000, Casco township, $95,220, and Geneva township, $46,000. By comparison, the property saved from fire loss during the responses total totaled $13,800,000.

"In 2025, we continued strengthening both individual staff skills and specialized response capabilities," said Hinz. "The SHAES' West Side Rope Rescue Team was established and the SHAES Dive Team saw increased participation and continued growth."

Four new career members were welcomed to SHAES and a firefighter and two Cadets were added to the Paid-on-Call roster. Firefighter/paramedic Brian Montgomery was promoted to captain.

Retiring after distinguished service were Lieutenants Dustin Guminski (25 years) and Mark Kaput (25 years), FF Patrick Quinn (17 years) and FF/Paramedic David Griessel (12 years).

SHAES continued its robust inspection program which made 2,496 contacts, including 816 short-term rental and 95 food vendor fire safety inspections during the year. In partnership with the American Red Cross and state-sponsored MI Prevention program, SHAES staff installed 280 smoke/carbon monoxide alarms throughout the community free of charge.

"This is an on-going service provided to our community," said Hinz. "A simple phone call to 269-639-1496 will results in the service being provided." Free smoke alarm sign-ups have also been posted at area schools and Van Buren Senior Services.

There were no civilian fire-related deaths in 2025. There were three emergency incidents in which responders were injured requiring medical attention.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) sets a benchmark goal of 8 minutes for fire/EMS responses to an incident. This is from the time of dispatch to the arrival on the scene of the incident by the first unit. SHAES during 2025 had an average response time of 5 minutes, 48 seconds. The average response time by unit of government: city of South Haven, 4:07; South Haven township, 5:09, Geneva township, 6:52; and Casco township, 7:02. The department bolstered personnel presence at its township stations to improve response times.

Recognitions awarded during the year included FF/EMT Ronald Wise, Firefighter of the Year, and Training Officer Shawn Smith, Leadership Award.

Department members presented the fire safety message to more than 1,100 kids at local schools and sponsored its 25th annual Fire Safety Fun Fair. The department also participated in the city-sponsored Touch-a-Truck event. Two successful pancake breakfasts brought the community together while supporting department initiatives.

"Community risk reduction and public engagement remain central to our mission," said Hinz. "Through prevention programs and events, we strive to build strong relationships while improving public safety."

The SHAES Honor Guard participated in several community events including the annual Salute to Veterans and a 9/11 Vigil at the downtown Firefighters Memorial. The name of deceased Fire Chief Sherman (Sherm) Dykstra was added to the Michigan Firefighter Memorial.

Three new off-road response trucks were put into service, and an order was placed for a custom-built fireboat that will enhance the department's ability to respond to emergencies on Lake Michigan and surrounding waterways. Donations from local and regional organizations, along with fund-raising efforts, funded the purchase of new battery-powered extrication equipment.

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VILLAGE OF DECATUR
VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING

TO: THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF THE VILLAGE OF DECATUR, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN AND ALL OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE **that a Public Hearing/Regular Meeting will be held by the Village of Decatur Village Council on Monday, February 23, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at the Decatur Village Hall located at 114 North Phelps Street within the Village.**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE **that the item(s) to be considered at this Public Hearing include, in brief, the following:**

1. Notice of Public Hearing on Budget Amendments for Fiscal Year Budget 2026.
2. Notice of Public Hearing on Budget Adoption for Fiscal Year Budget 2027.

GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	REVENUE FY 2026	EXPENSE FY 2026
101	GENERAL FUND	$1,718,955.00	$1,613,311.00
202	MAJOR ROAD FUND	$235,000.00	$84,100.00
203	LOCAL ROAD FUND	$224,211.00	$235,085.74
213	SALVAGE VIN FUND	$12,004.00	$13,500.00
204	STREETS FUND	$180,050.00	$125,000.00
244	BUSINESS LOANS FUND	$0	$0
245	HOME REHAB FUND	$0	$0
248	DDA FUND	$62,400.00	$62,400.00
590	SEWER FUND	$383,176.85	$359,751.90
591	WATER FUND	$ 554,150.00	$432,687.94
661	MOTOR POOL FUND	$154,300.00	$154,165.86
	OTHER	$152,287.35	$146,716.51
	GRAND TOTAL	**$3,676,534.20**	**$3,226,718.95**

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the draft amendments to the proposed mileages and budgets will be available at the public hearing.

The Village of Decatur will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services to individuals with disabilities at the hearing upon four (4) days' notice to the Village Clerk.

VILLAGE OF DECATUR
Megan Duncan, Village Clerk
Decatur Village Hall
114 North Phelps St., Decatur, MI 49045

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Planning Commission responds to City Council objections to Master Plan

By James Windell

The South Haven Planning Commission called a special meeting for Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026, in order to deal with the South Haven City Council's objections to the Master Plan revision.

Scheduled at 5:00 pm, the meeting went on to 8:05 pm, however, significant progress was made in responding to the City Council's stated reasons for failing to approve the revised Master Plan.

On September 15, 2025, the South Haven City Council rejected the Master Plan and agreed to return it to the Planning Commission with a request to recraft certain portions of three areas. Those areas would be: 1.) protect 89 North Shore Drive from being rezoned commercial in the future; 2.) protect the City from having developers put in manufactured housing developments on inappropriate parcels of land; and 3.) protect the property at 120 Baseline Road from becoming a manufactured home community.

In rejecting the Master Plan, as submitted by the Planning Commission, the City Council seemed to be responding to the groundswell of opposition to portions of the document that has been in the revision process for many months.

The City Council sent the following desired changes to the Planning Commission:

- That the Master Plan provide additional guidance regarding the Manufactured Housing Community (MHC) land use and zoning district. Specifically, that language be added to the Master Plan clarifying that 1) MHC would not be an appropriate land use in areas with environmental contamination without proper remediation proposed, 2) any MHC land use must be compatible with the surrounding area, 3) that maps 9-16 related to coastal resilience be considered in any decision to rezone property to MHC.
- That the future land use map designation for the property at the corner of North Shore Dr. and Oak Ct. (specifically 89 North Shore Drive as Bunde's Bakery) be changed from Commercial to Multi-family/ Attached Residential. The City Council has concerns that the current designation in the future land use map will lead to the erosion of the residential character of the neighborhood.
- That additional language be incorporated into the Master Plan to specify that the property on Baseline Rd. (commonly referred to as 120 Baseline) has been identified as an area where residential land use is appropriate for single family homes or attached residential dwellings and not resorts; specifically, workforce and missing middle housing would be most appropriate.

As the Special Meeting of the Planning Commission got underway, Zoning Administrator Kelly Getman-Dissette noted that the Planning Commission would go need to go through the three primary statements of objections from the City Council one by one. "The plan is to tackle these one at a time so that we can make sure we are staying on topic," she said.

To begin discussion, Chair Bob Sherman suggested that the commission take up the item regarding 120 Baseline first, "Which is one of the core items in the City Council's objections," he said.

After considerable discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Clark Gruber to submit a statement to be added to the Master Plan to satisfy City Council's objection by responding to all three points in the first objection. Gruber's motion was that residential land use would not be appropriate in any areas with environmental contamination without proper remediation proposed; any residential land use must be compatible with the surrounding area; and maps # 9 - 16 related to coastal resilience be considered in any decision to rezone property to residential land use.

That motion was amended by Commissioner Mike Campbell when he added that the language of the motion by Gruber be added to the future land use section of the revised Master Plan. That amendment and the original motion were unanimously approved.

With that objection resolved, the Planning Commission then took up the question of the future land use map designation for 89 North Shore Drive, where Bunde's Bakery is located. Sherman introduced discussion of this objection by noting that "The City Council thinks it should not be designated commercial but should remain as it is currently is – which is multifamily."

Various suggestions for dealing with this item were proposed by Commission members. Commissioner Mary Hosley offered a motion: "I move to direct staff to prepare language that low impact commercial establishments, like bakeries, would be allowed in multifamily RM1 districts, and to provide alternative language whether use by right or special land use to allow the Planning Commission to further refine as needed."

Since this motion did not address the future land use map, Commissioner Campbell amended the motion to include changing the future land use map for the property at 89 North Shore Drive to multifamily residential.

After clarifying questions and discussion, the Commission unanimously passed this motion.

The final item on the council's list of objections was then addressed. This item had to do with 120 Baseline Road. "I think there was language from the 2018 Master Plan that was lost in translation," Sherman said. "The council would like to see that language restored."

A motion was proposed by Commissioner Larry Heinig to the effect that the Planning Commission concur with the request of the City Council on item number three in their Resolution 2025-35 and the wording there be inserted appropriately back in the Master Plan.

After more discussion, this motion was also passed with all commissioners voting in favor of it.

Getman-Dissette and City staff will work on the language of the motions and return them to the Planning Commission in the future. After the Planning commission approves these changes in the Master Plan they will be forwarded to the City Council.

After the three-hour meeting, residents who had more vigorously opposed the original language in the Master Plan were elated. Jim Wettlaufer, who frequently spoke at both City Council and Planning Commission meetings voicing opposition to designating 89 North Shore Drive as commercial was pleased with the outcome of the meeting.

"We came to every City Council meeting and we did the work just like the City Council did," Wettlaufer said. "I think they came up with a reasonable solution."

ZBA grants variance on property that lacks parking

James Windell

Stacy DuPree waited anxiously as the Zoning Board of Appeals discussed her request for a variance on her property at 79 Park Avenue in South Haven.

DuPree asked the ZBA for a variance in order to use her house for a short-term rental. The problem, however, was that Section 2203.06 of the City's Zoning Ordinance requires on-site parking. Her house at 79 Park Avenue has three bedrooms and would require two off-street parking spaces. The property has a curbed area, but less than 11 feet of the driveway is on the lot. Cars parked are about half on her property and halfway in the municipal right-of-way. Therefore, in order to receive a special land use permit, a variance from the parking requirement would be necessary.

This matter came before the ZBA and was scheduled for a public hearing on January 26, 2026, after which the ZBA would decide on granting the variance.

Prior to the public hearing, DuPree spoke before the ZBA and indicated that her property is so configured that on-site parking is impossible. However, she told the Board that there is parking on the street and that this would not cause a problem in the neighborhood.

Since no residents appeared for the public hearing, there was no opposition to a variance. Zoning Administrator Kelly Getman-Dissette indicated to the ZBA that the only concern was the parking issue. The Board discussed the parking issue – something they have indicated that is always a concern in the City of South Haven. All variance requests must be reviewed under Article 24 by the ZBA and the property must meet the standards set forth by Section 2408. After reviewing all 8 standards and finding that the property was not disqualified by any of the standards, a motion was made to approve the variance request.

The motion was passed unanimously.

Now the matter must go before the Planning Commission to get a special land use permit since the variance is approved. The matter will appear on the Planning Commission agenda in coming months.

Although relieved that she was successful in this step of the process, DuPree said that the next stage is going before the Planning Commission. "There are no guarantees," she said about what the Planning Commission might decide. "Nothing is certain."

Conference scheduled in Carlotto lawsuit postponed

By James Windell

A scheduled Rule 16 case conference in the lawsuit Pat Carlotto brought against the City of South Haven was postponed.

The case conference, which was to take place on the phone between Federal District Judge Paul L. Maloney and the two parties on January 30, 2026, was postponed when the case was transferred to Magistrate Judge Phillip J. Green, who is also in the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan.

Sgt. Pat Carlotto filed a federal lawsuit in November, 2025, alleging that South Haven city officials retaliated against him over participation in a lawsuit filed by another officer three years ago. The suit states that he was qualified to have been selected as South Haven Police Chief.

A Rule 16 case conference in U.S. federal courts is basically a pretrial meeting during which the judge and the parties plan how the case will proceed, set deadlines, manage discovery, and explore settlement. Ordered under Rule 16 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, such a meeting is essentially the court's way of taking early control of the case to keep it efficient, organized, and on track.

Judge Maloney had previously ordered the case conference stating in his order that he would review the joint status report and explore methods of expediting the disposition of the action by "Establishing early and ongoing case management; discouraging wasteful pretrial activities; establishing limitations on discovery; facilitating the settlement of a case; establishing an early, firm trial date; and improving the quality of the trial through thorough preparation."

When the case was transferred to Magistrate Judge Green, the conference was cancelled so that Judge Green could reschedule at a time that fit in his schedule. Cases are frequently transferred to magistrate judges to help manage the heavy workload of federal courts. However, District judges retain ultimate authority and review magistrate judges' recommendations when required.

A clerk in Judge Green's office was unable to say when the case conference would be rescheduled.

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Eddie Polk speaks to Ward One Action Committee

By James Windell

Eddie Polk brings a particular vision to his new role as a South Haven City Council member. The way he sees his role is to help bring about a collaborative spirit amongst the council members.

Polk talked about his vision and how he hopes to make a difference on the City Council at the Ward One Action Committee meeting on Monday, January 26, 2026.

During the meeting at the Bailey Museum, the President of the Ward One Action Committee, Dorothy Sherrod, prior to introducing Polk, said that the Action Committee and its work is all about: community. "It's about coming together and trying to make things better," she said. "As a community, we have the capacity to make a difference."

Polk, the guest speaker, began his remarks by thanking the people who supported him in his campaign for City Council and he said that it was an honor to serve the community on the council. He went on to say that his vision for making a difference as a new council

Eddie Polk

member is to "strive to develop a collaborative spirit amongst the council members." He added that he would personally only engage in debates on issues and concerns "which are based on facts, not those which are based on personal interest or concerns."

He also said that he intended to ensure that the intent of South Haven City Ordinances and the Municipal Charter are mutually understood so that "we apply and enforce them in a consistent manner to address existing issues and concerns facing the city."

In his remarks, Polk, who had 45 years of experience working for Consumers Energy and for Entergy at the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant, said that he found the recent training for new city council members invaluable. "The topics and the approach were great," he said, "and we really had a good time – not just in learning but getting to know each other as well."

He mentioned that during the training there was discussion about the culture city council members might desire as a model for the community. He said he wanted a culture based on trust and integrity. In the training, he said, there was also attention given to the roles and responsibilities of various positions on the city council and in the city's government.

"It's important that we all stay in our lanes and be responsible for only what our role involves," he said.

He ended his remarks by saying that it's important for city council members to connect with each other to establish healthy, functioning, and professional relationships that help them achieve results. "It's about connecting with one another," he concluded.